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MONTANA TRANSPORTATION PLANNING Newsline

Published by the Montana Department of Transportation

TRANPLAN 21 COMPLETED!

After over a year of work and the involvement of thousands of Montanans, TranPlan 21, Montana's first statewide multimodal transportation plan, is finally done. As reported in previous editions of Newsline, the effort was mandated by Congress in the 1991 Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA). The 800-page final document has been delivered to the Federal agencies responsible for overseeing the process and is considered a model for other states in the region.

Twenty-Year Plan
TranPlan 21 provides a framework for MDT's management of Montana's transportation system well into the 21st Century. Although the plan doesn't list specific transportation projects, it does provide a comprehensive technical analysis of the system and sets future priorities for the Department.

Public Involvement Critical
The process of developing TranPlan 21 included an extensive public involvement process with public open houses, focus groups, surveys, newspaper advertisements, a toll-free information line, meetings with Tribal Governments, and numerous presentations to special interest groups. The input was invaluable and much appreciated.

Overview Available
Copies of TranPlan 21 have been distributed to major libraries across Montana. In addition, TranPlan 21 Overviews were mailed to several hundred citizens and groups directly involved in the development of the plan. Call our hotline at (800) 714-7296 for more information about TranPlan 21 or a copy of the Overview. ◆

TranPlan 21 Implementation Underway

Although the development of TranPlan 21 was a major undertaking, the real challenge is in the implementation of the new twenty-year plan.

The Transportation Planning Division and other affected MDT offices are currently looking at the resources needed to implement the various actions adopted in the plan. Although many of these actions were already being implemented, many others will require changes in Department and Division priorities.

The Transportation Planning Division is also developing strategies for future evaluation and updates of TranPlan 21 as part of the Division's continuing planning process. This process will emphasize flexibility and responsiveness to specific issues rather than frequent (and expensive) updates of the complete plan.

The public involvement component of the continuing statewide planning process will build on the lessons learned during the development of TranPlan 21. Our goal is to develop a cost-effective, responsive and broad-based process that will facilitate public and stakeholder input in the planning process as well as the dissemination of information on planning-related topics. ◆

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Other Planning Projects in Progress

The Transportation Planning Division recently wrapped up work on another major planning requirement of ISTEA involving three management systems, and began an effort that should lead to better intercity passenger service in Montana.

Management Systems
ISTEA required States to develop six management systems to aid in the transportation planning and programming process. MDT already had three of the management systems substantially in place. However, the Intermodal, Congestion and Public Transportation Management Systems were developed in conjunction with TranPlan 21. The Transportation Planning Division recently delivered copies of the three systems to the Federal Highway Administration and the Federal Transit Administration. Although the management systems are 'final', the Department will continue to refine the systems as they're implemented.

Intercity Study
The Intercity and Rural Passenger Transportation Study (IRPTS) will identify gaps in Montana's intercity transportation system and suggest ways to preserve and enhance this important service. The study effort will benefit from input from an advisory committee of intercity passenger service providers. ◆

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Articles appearing in the Transportation Planning Newsletter are contributed by the staff of the MDT Transportation Planning Division.

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Did you know that...

75% of Montana's vehicle miles traveled (VMT) take place outside of our 14 urban areas? Only South Dakota has a more rural character to its highway and street traffic.

Source: Highway Statistics-1993, USDOT

Montana Transit Video Completed

The MDT's Transit Section recently received the end product of its six-month long video venture and some early private screenings have drawn rave reviews.

Entitled, "Bound for the Future: The Story of Montana Transit", this video is an informative tour that showcases a cross-section of the federally-funded transit providers in the state.

The fast-paced 13-minute video is designed to introduce the concept and need for transit in Montana as it tells the story and availability of Montana transit services. Numerous comments from drivers, passengers, and system managers help the story unfold.

"The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) has had a very large impact on the transit industry by requiring buses, trains, vans, and other transit vehicles to be accessible and lift-equipped," says Sam Prestipino, the MDT ADA Coordinator. "This video does a fine job of not only sending this message, but also demonstrates many other different types of disabilities. I like it."

If you would like to see this video, copies can be obtained from the Transit Section by calling (406) 444-4210. ◆

Transit Awards Vehicles and Equipment for FY '96

MDT's Transit Section received $304,969 in Section 5310 (formerly Section 16) funds for FY '96 and the Montana Highway Commission added $300,000 in Surface Transportation Program (STP) monies for the purchase of vehicles and equipment for transit providers in Montana.

The Transit Section recently completed its selection and screening process of FY 1996 capital assistance applicants. Vern Littell, Section 5310 Program Manager, expects to begin delivering buses and vans early this fall.

The Transit Section currently has 62 transit grantees statewide operating 91 vehicles. A total of 24 vehicles will be placed throughout the state over the next year.

Following is a list of successful applicants. Each recipient will pay 30 percent of the cost of the vehicle.

Ravalli Services (Hamilton)
Special Transportation, Inc. (Billings)
Easter Seal (Great Falls)
Reach, Inc. (Bozeman)
Opportunity Resources, Inc. (Missoula)
Quality Life Concepts (Great Falls)
Rocky Mountain Development (Helena)
Big Sandy Activities (Big Sandy)
Great Falls Senior Citizens (Great Falls)
Phillips County COA (Malta)
Ravalli County COA (Hamilton)
Carbon Co. Memorial Hospital (Red Lodge)
Richland Opportunities (Sidney)
Glen-Wood Inc. (Plentywood)
Liberty County COA (Chester)
Native American Senior Citizens (St. Ignatius)
AWARE, Inc. (Anaconda)
Blackfeet Transit (Browning)
The Bus (Butte)
Helena Bus (Helena)
Eagle Transit (Kalispell)
Fergus County COA (Lewistown)

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Montana Spearheading Region VIII Coordination Study

The Transit Section has also received a grant from the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) for a coordination study involving six states in FTA's Region VIII. This study, involving State Departments of Health and Human Services, Transportation and transit providers in Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, Wyoming, Utah, and Colorado, will identify successful and unsuccessful coordination activities as well as barriers to coordination. A typology will be developed to assist elected officials, planners, and managers in improving coordination.

Consultant Peter Schauer of Boonville, Missouri has been selected to conduct the study. ◆

Did you know that...

MDT provides funding to over 60 transit providers throughout Montana?

Source: TranPlan 21

Amtrak Cuts Service on the Empire Builder

On February 1, Amtrak initiated a series of service reductions including the Empire Builder route, Montana's only rail passenger service. The move from daily to quad weekly service (Tuesday, Thursday, Saturday, Sunday) triggered a ground swell of state concern and local community action.

Communities across the Hi-Line are organizing not only to protest the Amtrak action, but to initiate a process for grass roots problem solving. MDT is working closely with organizers to extend communications with the five states impacted by the Empire Builder service reduction. ◆

Havre Meeting on Amtrak Reductions

A large crowd gathered in the Student Union Building on the MSU-Northern campus in Havre on April 29 to listen to Senator Max Baucus, Governor Marc Racicot, Amtrak's Peter Turrell, and others speak on the status of the Amtrak system reductions. Participants were invited to testify and ask questions of those present. The audience was told that recent system reductions have successfully eliminated 21 percent of the Corporation's $21.5 million projected shortfall.

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Did you know that...

92% of Montana's agricultural products are shipped out of state by rail?

Source: TranPlan 21

Senator Baucus announced a legislative effort to direct $350 million annually out of the transit account of the highway trust fund. This money would move into an Amtrak Capital Improvements Trust to allow for the update and replacement of cars and equipment. Equipment shortages have crippled Amtrak's ability to provide service which would help the corporation grow out of its fiscal problem.

Governor Racicot encouraged a national commitment to rail passenger service. Noting the problem goes beyond individual states, he pointed to the need for a national transportation policy on this issue.

Northern Tier counties assisted by economic development groups have formed an ad hoc committee to pursue continuation and expansion of rail passenger service for the area. However, Turrell warned the audience that, barring a Federal bailout, Amtrak will cease all operations if the remaining 79 percent of the shortfall isn't eliminated by October. ◆

TDM Workshop Held in Great Falls

MDT sponsored a workshop on Transportation Demand Management (TDM) at the Ponderosa Inn in Great Falls on May 9 and 10. About 40 registrants representing state government agencies, city and county planners, transit providers, engineers, community leaders and interested citizens attended this technical workshop on TDM techniques and practices.

Following Tuesday's session, the group toured the River's Edge Trail which follows the Missouri River from 10th Avenue South to Rainbow Dam. ◆

Transportation consultant Peter Schauer discusses TDM strategies with workshop participants.

Montana Legislative Report

The 54th Legislature considered many bills of interest to the Transportation Planning Division. Below is a select list of those bills which either have an impact on the Division or are associated with our planning programs.

HJ 13: Amtrak--This joint resolution, filed with the Secretary of State, urges the Montana Congressional Delegation to support continued daily Amtrak passenger service through Montana, and urges the President and the U.S. Congress to include a strong Amtrak system in any plans for a national transportation system.

SB 104: Transportation Commission--Effective July 1, 1995, the Highway Commission will be changed to the Transportation Commission.

This bill also established new responsibilities for the Commission in the allocation and administration of funds for non-highway modes.

SB 183: Scenic Byways Program--This bill would have given the Commission and MDT the authority to develop and manage a state scenic byways program. The bill failed.

SB 361: Transfer Part of Highway Safety to MDT--One provision of this bill will transfer part of the Highway Traffic Safety Program from the Montana Department of Justice to the MDT effective July 1, 1995. This provision

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is based on a recommendation of the Governor's Task Force to Renew Government. Initially, the Program will be housed in the Transportation Planning Division. The bill passed.

More information on these or other bills is available from Jan Vogel at (406) 444-4262.

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Did you know that...

Montana has 123 airports including 13 commercial service airports?

Source: MDT Aeronautics Division

1996 Statewide Transportation Improvement Program

The Project Analysis Section is in the process of selecting transportation projects for the Federally required 1996 Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP), the annual MDT publication that lists projects that will be funded in the next three years.

The STIP contains all highway projects that are proposed to be funded for preliminary design work. It also includes proposed projects for right-of-way acquisitions, utility relocations and actual construction. Proposed Federal Transit Administration (FTA) grant projects are listed as well as all transportation projects funded by other Federal programs.

The draft STIP will be available for review during an upcoming public involvement process. If you have any questions or comments concerning the STIP please contact the Project Analysis Section at (406) 444-7639 or our hotline at (800) 714-7296.

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Did you know that...

Over 84% of all manufactured goods are moved in and out of Montana by truck?

Source: TranPlan 21

MTA Fall Conference Planned for September 27-28

Mark your calendars NOW to attend the Montana Transit Association's Fall Conference in Great Falls on September 27 and 28.

Conference preparations are under way and information will be distributed as plans materialize.

Plan to attend and take advantage of the networking and training opportunities available at this conference. ◆

Billings to Host 4th Annual State Bus Roadeo

ATTENTION TRANSIT MANAGERS AND DRIVERS...it's not too soon to make plans to attend Montana's 4th Annual Bus ROADEO. Sponsored by the Montana Department of Transportation and the Montana Transit Association, the State Bus ROADEO will be held at the Billings Logan International Airport Grounds on August 13, 1995. There will be a practice day for all participants on Saturday, August 12.

A bus ROADEO is a competition event for transit bus drivers which includes completing an obstacle course designed to duplicate everyday driving. The Montana Bus ROADEO will be conducted in two divisions: 1) full-size bus and 2) paratransit. The winner of each division will receive an all-expense paid trip, through the RTAP Scholarship Program, to the national competitions.

Detailed information, registration packages, and updated information will be mailed as soon as it is available. ◆

Transportation Planning Division Telephone Numbers

Only the most frequently requested numbers are listed here. For an area or person not listed, call the toll-free number **(800) 714-7296** (in Montana only), or **406-444-3423** and your call will be directed to the appropriate individual.

CTEP .....Mike Davis.....444-4383
Mapping.....Joe O'Neil.....444-6119
Projects.....Jeff Ebert.....444-7639
Rail Planning.....Jan Vogel.....444-4262
Secondary Roads....Gary Larson....444-6110
Statistics.....Rick Rogne.....444-6111
Traffic Statistics.....Dennis Hult....444-6122
Transit.....Janis Winston..444-4210
Urban Planning .....Ross Tervo.....444-3445

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Speaker's Bureau Initiated

Tired of going to MDT meetings only to be told your particular concern can't or won't be addressed? Or that the staff at the meeting doesn't know the answers to your questions and will have to get back to you?

In an effort to address this common and very frustrating problem and provide better service to the public, the Transportation Planning Division has initiated a trial "Transportation Planning Speaker's Bureau". The Speaker's Bureau is designed to respond to individual requests for information on specific transportation planning issues by providing staff people appropriate for the specific issue.

For more information on the Speaker's Bureau call the Transportation Planning Hotline at (800) 714-7296 or (406) 444-7646. ◆

Did you know that...

Over 30,000 Montanans walk or bicycle to work?

Source: 1990 Census

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